

Dear committee members,

My name is Paul Isaac and I'm from Storrs, Connecticut. I'm a junior STEM and University Scholar in the Special Program in Medicine pursuing a dual degree in Molecular and Cell Biology and Diagnostic Genetic Sciences with a minor in Bioinformatics at UConn's Storrs campus. Both the degree programs I'm in and the scholar designations I hold would not have even existed without the funding provided by the General Assembly and the NEXGENCT initiative. To this end, I want to sincerely thank you both for the funding you've already provided UConn with and for allowing us students to make our voices heard in this assembly and discussion of UConn's future funding.

I've spent my life growing up beside UConn, and I've always been amazed to see how much it's grown alongside me. I was born in UConn Health and was raised a mere stone's throw away from UConn's Storrs campus. During this time, I saw the campus change, new buildings appear, and bigger and more diverse batches of students walk through campus. During my time at E. O. Smith High School, it was a culmination of the college credit I'd built up through ECE courses and my exposure to the labs in the newly built Engineering and Science Building that made me develop my passion for biology and genetics and consider UConn as my first choice for college. The stories of UConn students doing and achieving amazing things through the grants, programs, and facilities that UConn provided only further convinced me that UConn was the college through which I could pursue my passions to the best of my ability and truly make a change in my local community.

In the time that I've spent at UConn, I've only grown prouder of being part of the pack and I sure that I would only been able to achieve the things I have through UConn. It's through the generous funding that the General Assembly has provided that I've been able to receive the STEM Presidential Scholarship that's made college education affordable to finance, receive research grants that allowed me to pursue my interest in furthering conservation of CT's horseshoe crab populations and developing novel diagnostic tests using biological data collected from them, and spread STEM education to Middle schoolers across Connecticut by hosting the Southern New England Middle School Science Bowl.

It's all the positive experiences I've had at UConn, especially in the COVID era, that have allowed me to grow as both a person and as a scholar. As my graduation approaches, I hope to continue my time at UConn by pursuing an MD or MD/PHD at the UConn School of Medicine and hopefully become a practicing physician at one of Connecticut's many Hospitals. I cannot reiterate or truly put into words how much the University of Connecticut has done for me through it's amazingly supportive and passionate faculty, funding, and experiences it has provided. None of which would have been possible or will continue to be possible for future students if UConn receives significant cuts to its funding. Above all else, UConn is a school that has been steadily and perpetually growing and adapting with the times and is now rising as one of Connecticut's best and even the nation's best public universities. This growth, which often manifests itself as the continuous construction that happens on camps, is a sign that UConn is committed to putting the state's funds to good use in drawing in the brightest minds and giving them the support and facilities to both enjoy and become enriched by their college education.